

Wisbech Rural District Council.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1939.

*To the Chairman and Members of the Rural District Council
of Wisbech.*

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of presenting my first Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary conditions of the District.

During the short time that I have been your Medical Officer of Health the greater part of my time has been taken up with A.R.P. with the result that only urgent Public Health matters could receive my full attention.

The most important Public Health problem that confronts the Rural District Council is the provision of an adequate supply of wholesome water for those areas which are not already supplied. This matter requires the immediate action of the Council. The longer the delay the greater is the danger to health and the greater the cost involved.

The influx of evacuees has not adversely affected the general health of the inhabitants. There have been no epidemics as a result of the increased population.

The Minister of Health has recently requested that the reports of Medical Officers of Health shall be brief and confined to essential and urgent matters.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

J. F. DAWSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

STAFF.

Medical Officers of Health :—C. H. Gunson, M.B., B.Ch.,
(till 30th September, 1939).

J. F. Dawson, M.B., B.Ch., D.P.H.
(from 1st October, 1939).

Sanitary Inspector :— T. A. C. March, M.S.I.A., Cert.R.S.I.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (in acres)	49,841
Population (Registrar General's estimate, 1939)	11,700
Number of Inhabited Houses...	3,475
Rateable Value	£27,378
Amount represented by a penny rate...	£126 17s. 9d.

VITAL STATISTICS.

	Total	M.	F.	
Live Births—Legitimate	167	91	76	Birth Rate per 1,000, estimated resident population mid 1939—15.12
Illegitimate	10	6	4	
Stillbirths... ..	2	2	—	Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births—11.17
Deaths	114	66	48	Death Rate per 1,000, estimated average population — 9.53

Deaths from Puerperal Causes:—

	Deaths.	Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births.
Puerperal sepsis ...	Nil	Nil
Other Puerperal causes	1	5.58
Total	<u>1</u>	<u>5.58</u>

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age:—

All Infants per 1,000 live births	33.89
Legitimate Infants per 1,000 legitimate live births ...	35.92
Illegitimate Infants per 1,000 illegitimate live births ...	Nil
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	13
„ „ Measles (all ages)	Nil
„ „ Whooping Cough (all ages)	1
„ „ Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	Nil

LABORATORY FACILITIES.—There has been no change in the existing arrangements for the examination of bacteriological and pathological specimens.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES.—Infectious diseases are removed to Hospital by the Wisbech Isolation Hospital Ambulance. Accident and other hospital cases are removed by the Wisbech Borough Ambulance or by the ambulance belonging to the Hospital to which the patient is to be admitted.

Since the commencement of the War, 3 vehicles have been fitted out as Ambulances. These are for use in the Borough of Wisbech or the Rural District of Wisbech in the event of casualties occurring as the result of air raids.

NURSING IN THE HOME.—Nursing in the home is carried out by 5 District Nurses.

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS.—As a result of the war there have been established 14 First Aid Points in the Rural District. There is also a mobile unit at Wisbech which is available for the Rural District. These will deal with casualties resulting from air raids if such casualties occur in the district.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

MILK SUPPLY.—Cowsheds, Dairies and Milkshops are inspected frequently to see that the requirements of the Milk and Dairies Order, 1926 are being complied with.

MEAT AND OTHER FOODS.—Every effort is made to ensure that all meat slaughtered in this district is examined prior to being offered for sale for human consumption. Shops, stalls and vehicles are periodically inspected in order to see that the Public Health (Meat) Regulations are being complied with.

WATER SUPPLY.—There has not been any change in the water supply to the district. Some districts have the advantage of a piped water supply, whilst others have to depend on the rainfall. If the rainfall in the summer months is below average, the shortage of water in some of the areas becomes acute.

The poorness in the quality of the available water generally is even a greater danger to health than the deficiency in quantity. In the past there seems to have been a lot of misunderstanding regarding the possibilities of obtaining a piped supply for those districts not yet on the mains. I must emphasize in the interests of public health the necessity for providing a piped supply of water to these districts.

Samples of water taken from the mains during the year proved satisfactory.

A number of samples taken from cisterns, etc., proved on analysis to be of poor quality.

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.—There is not any system of Sewage Disposal. The houses are drained into cesspools.

HOUSING.—Unfortunately the war has put a stop to any work which might have been done in this direction. Houses are now occupied which in peace time would be regarded as unfit for human habitation. Owing to the influx of evacuees the standard of overcrowding as laid down by the Housing Act has of necessity been ignored.

SCHOOLS.—A number of schools in the rural district are without a piped water supply with the result that there is always the possibility of a shortage in summer months. The water is a poor quality and filtration is necessary in most cases to render it safe for drinking purposes. Here again I would stress the importance of providing a sufficient supply of wholesome water.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

During the year an outbreak of Diphtheria occurred. Most of the cases occurring in Fridaybridge.

During the year 51.1% of the parents consented to have their children immunised against Diphtheria. In view of the fact that there have been so many cases of Diphtheria during the year one would have expected a greater response on the part of the parents to have their children immunised.

Immunisation was carried out at the schools. The prophylactic used was Toxoid—Antitoxin Floccules (Suspension).

NUMBER OF CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED.

Scarlet Fever ...	...	...	...	15
Diphtheria ...	...	...	...	17
Pneumonia ...	...	...	...	20

MUMPS.—An outbreak of Mumps during the spring accounted for 106 cases.

TUBERCULOSIS.

10 New cases were notified to me during the year—5 male (4 respiratory, 1 non-respiratory), 5 female (2 respiratory, 3 non-respiratory).

DEATHS.

RESPIRATORY.		NON-RESPIRATORY.	
M.	F.	M.	F.
2	—	1	1